

I oppose any further weakening of the broadcast ownership rules as the Commission is contemplating. The Commission must play an important role and not abdicate responsibilities to the Justice Department's Antitrust Division or the FTC to keep media consolidation in check. The antitrust laws and those responsible for enforcing them are not as uniquely positioned as the FCC to determine what is in the public interest regarding media consolidation.

The public interest and the foundations of our democracy require the free flow of information from diverse sources. Media ownership and consolidation is not merely a consumer issue and does not involve merely consumer interests that antitrust laws can protect, but involves important principles of public information and debate that has been so important to this country. Prior weakenings of these rules and laxity in enforcement of antitrust laws have led to the point of consolidation that we are at now, where six large media conglomerates account for the majority of our news and entertainment. I am one of many, many citizens deeply troubled by this ominous trend.

I am a former telecommunications lawyer and have submitted dozens of official comments to the FCC on behalf of NECA and its member telephone companies. I appreciate the FCC's efforts in permitting the general public to participate in these and other important proceedings. I also greatly appreciate Commissioner Copps' efforts in this proceeding in particular. I sincerely hope that the Commission will give due regard to the many thousands of comments Chairman Powell has acknowledged have been filed through this tool. The public interest as expressed by the public itself and not special interest lobbyists, is critical in determining these rules changes.